

**LOUISIANA NRCS CIVIL RIGHTS COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**NRCS STATE OFFICE**  
**ALEXANDRIA, LOUISIANA**  
**April 11, 2001**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Dexter Sapp, Aaron Hinkston, Darlene Dean, Keith Latiolais, Susie McBride, Holly Martien, Michael Trusclair, Wanda Simmons, Randy Welch, and Bobbie Wall.

**ABSENT:** Billy Moore, Herb Bourque, Jason Hardie

**OPENING COMMENTS:**

Dexter Sapp opened the meeting at 9:30 a.m. and welcomed members to the committee. He provided comments from the previous Civil Rights meeting. He also reported that Barbara Andrus had been hired as the new Human Resources Officer and will be on the Civil Rights Committee. Darlene Dean has been the temporary representative until that position was filled.

The regular Civil Rights Committee Meeting proceeded as follows:

**EQIP FIELD DAY - COMMENTS FROM KEITH LATIOLAIS.** Keith reported on the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Field Day that was held on March 17, 2001 at Cade Farms. The Natural Resources Conservation Service and the University of Louisiana at Lafayette presented this workshop. The Crawfish Promotion Board and the Rice Council also had members present. Practices discussed included irrigation water management and land leveling. Crawfish management, trapping, and baiting techniques were also discussed. The purpose of this workshop was to provide information on EQIP and to show that small farm acreage can be used productively. Another workshop is scheduled for June with the primary topics being the stages of crawfish production and crawfish harvesting.

**FSA FOCUS GROUP MEETING – COMMENTS FROM AARON HINKSTON.**

Aaron reported on the FSA Focus Group Meeting held on March 27, 2001, that was a joint effort with the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rural Development, and the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service. This meeting consisted of the FSA Outreach Group with 15 farmers in attendance: 11 males and 4 females. This meeting focused on the Florida Parishes, which consist of East Feliciana, West Feliciana, Livingston, St. Helena, St Tammany, Tangipahoa, and Washington Parishes. One of the primary questions asked to the group was, “What can USDA do to assist with agricultural needs?” Twelve points were brought out which included: (1) Financial assistance, (2) Disaster Programs, (3) Developing ponds, (4) Technical assistance, (5) Young Farmers Program, (6) Soils books and maps interpretations, (7)

Diversification, (8) Networking information, (9) Marketing of products, (10) Cooperative formation and transportation for marketing, (11) Irrigation, and (12) Grazing.

The group was also asked “What can Rural Development do to make your community better?” Three major areas were discussed: (1) More outreach, (2) Assist with loans, and (3) Housing grants.

As a result of the FSA Focus Group meeting, an Outreach Workshop will be held on June 9, 2001.

## **COMMENTS FROM HOLLY MARTIEN.**

**AMERICAN INDIAN OUTREACH CONFERENCE.** Holly reported on an Indian Youth Camp that was held at Bunkie on March 30 – April 1, 2001. This conference was to assist the American Indian Youth to develop leadership skills, to communicate and get along with others and to motivate them to make things happen. Holly attended the Saturday night Pow Wow and received excellent experiences including learning one dance, a prayer dance to ask for healing. A member of the United Houma Nation explained the ceremonies and rites to Holly to help her better understand and appreciate the events. This was also a great outreach effort for Holly in that she made an outreach connection with an American Indian craftsperson that was looking for a specific clay to make some of their native crafts. Holly was able to let her know of the soil surveys and soil scientists that NRCS has available for their use.

**TOURISM BROCHURE.** Holly reported that she has been working on a project with Benny Dobson to develop a tourism brochure for five American Indian Tribes in Northwest and Central Louisiana. The project is being funded by a grant from the U.S. Forest Service Rural Community Assistance Program. Additional sponsors are Natural Resources Conservation Service, Twin Valley Resource Conservation & Development Area, Inc., and Natchitoches Parish Tourism Commission. The five tribes/associations that will be in the brochure included: (1) Choctaw Apache Tribe of Ebarb, (2) Clifton Choctaw Tribe, (3) Twin Eagles Indian Association, (4) Adais Caddo Indian Tribe, and (5) Four Winds Tribe – Louisiana Cherokee Confederacy.

**SPECIAL EMPHASIS ACT.** Holly also reported on a special emphasis act for Louisiana. Two Hispanic students from Texas A & M at Kingsville will be summer interns at the Plant Materials Center. These students will live in the dorm at the Plant Materials Center. The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) will pay for their internship.

**WEB SITE ACCESSIBILITY.** Holly reported that all government web sites must be Section 508 compatible by June 2001. This means that all government web sites must be accessible by all people with disabilities. A web-based tool named “Bobby” analyzes web pages for this accessibility and is offered as a free public service. “Bobby” is to be used as a first step to ensure accessible web page design. The staff for Louisiana will complete this process.

### **AFFIRMATIVE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM TRAINING – DARLENE DEAN.**

Darlene Dean provided training on the Affirmative Employment Program (AEP). The objective of AEP is to build a diverse workforce within our agency and achieve goals that are set for fulfilling this diversity. The occupational categories covered in AEP include: (1) Professional, (2) Administrative, (3) Technical, (4) Clerical, and (5) Other. Numerical goals were established if a conspicuous absence of an underrepresented group was present. The committee that established the AEP utilized many sources to determine the underrepresented groups to include in the program. This process including setting goals to build the workforce over the next five years. Information on setting goals was to identify disparity as compared to the civilian labor force. The committee used workforce planning tools to identify potential jobs in the next five years, such as those retiring. Goals were targeted to assist with filling absences of underrepresented groups. The goals work in that applicants are still considered based on qualifications, but if underrepresented applicants are present and are qualified, then they can be considered for the position. In the South Central Region, there will be 393 employees to retire by December 31, 2005, and at this time, there are only 28 people in the pipeline to fill these positions.

Darlene then led a discussion on outreach to underrepresented groups.

**CIVIL RIGHTS PERFORMANCE REPORT.** Dexter reported on the Civil Rights Performance Report for FY 2000 on behalf of Herb Bourque. He wanted to make each Civil Rights Committee member aware of the report. Last year's report will be submitted to various NRCS personnel in order to update Louisiana's civil rights performance for 2001.

**CIVIL RIGHT COMPLIANCE REVIEWS.** A group discussion was held on the Civil Rights Compliance Reviews. Michael Trusclair and Keith Latiolais had brought to the Civil Rights Committee's attention that handicapped parking spaces do not have to be painted blue. This is not law according to the American Disabilities Act (ADA). Also discussed were that the bathrooms must have a handicapped designation. If the building is not according to the ADA, then document, and the District Conservationist must write to the landlord informing of the features that are not according to the ADA.

The committee also discussed packets that could be distributed to each field office to assist with preparing for the Civil Rights Compliance Review. Suggestions for this packet included to add the complaint process, national manual Office of Civil Rights DM 4300-1-Process for Processing Discrimination Complaints and Conducting Civil Rights Compliance Reviews in USDA Conducted Programs and Activities, Accessibility Guide, Violence in the Workplace information, Alternative Dispute Resolution, and booklet on Workplace Conflicts and Concerns.

It was discussed that some District Conservationists were not prepared and did not have all their information together for the Civil Rights Compliance Review. The Civil Rights Committee discussed putting together a file folder/accordion file for each field office to organize all civil rights information. This would assist the District Conservationists in keeping their civil rights activities together and up-to-date.

The Civil Rights Committee also would like input from Juanita Hoffpauir and Delena McKeithen on what should go into the proposed civil rights packet and file folder/accordion file. Also some of the civil rights filing information might be presented at the Secretaries' Workshops.

**FY 2000 CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLIANCE REVIEW SUMMARY.** Dexter Sapp reported on the Compliance Review Summary. The Civil Rights Committee discussed giving a sanitized version to the ASTC/Field Operations to use as a tool to assist the District Conservationists. The Civil Rights Committee discussed the sections of the summary. After discussion the Committee decided that 2 years of summary data (1999 and 2000) should be sanitized and sent to all field offices along with the blank questionnaire to assist the District Conservationists with preparation for Civil Rights Compliance Reviews.

**COMMENTS FROM DEXTER SAPP.** Dexter played a VoiceCom message from Don Gohmert on low input practices that will meet the needs of low income/low input producers. Mr. Gohmert asked for assistance on identifying any examples of these practices that can be used in Louisiana. Herb Bourque will be in charge of gathering the information.

**COMMENTS FROM RANDY WELCH.** Randy reported on a Partners Project that involved a Moist Soil Management and Shallow Water Area Management Workshop. John Pitre from Natural Resources Conservation Service and Nick Smith from Ducks Unlimited conducted the workshop. Approximately 150 people attended the workshop.

**CLOSING COMMENTS:**

The next meeting will be held in July 2001. Dexter stated that he would poll the committee concerning the next meeting date.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

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Bobbie Wall, Recorder

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Date

Concur \_\_\_\_\_

Do Not Concur \_\_\_\_\_

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Dexter Sapp, CR Comm. Chairperson

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Date

Approved \_\_\_\_\_

Disapproved \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Don Gohmert

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date